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Finding Revolutionary Love in a World of Profound Alienation

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Love. How many poems have been written, how many pieces of art have been created, how much ink has been spilt about love? It is for a reason that humankind has ever since tried to figure out the secrets and magic behind love. At the same time, the meaning and substance of love somehow still remain a mystery. Today, we come upon many different definitions of love. Sometimes it is said that love could save us all, sometimes we are told that love is blind. Sometimes love hurts, sometimes love means healing. But what kind of love are we talking about and under what conditions is love meaningful and free?

When talking and thinking about love, we have to consider the social and political conditions of our time. In a society which is shaped by capitalism, egoism, sexism and (self-)alienation, the meaning and substance of love becomes more and more unclear and inscrutable. We can barely grasp and experience love anymore. What does it mean to love, in

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the overstraining mess where one finds themselves locked between anonymity, excessive consumption, exploitation and war? It's often the case, and perhaps even understandable, that our very concept of love is developed to escape social life and to build a small, safe bubble of love in the midst of a violent, selfish society. But this kind of approach to love will sooner or later lead to frustration and disappointment.

Not only romantic relationships, but also the relationship between parents and children, between humans and nature and between the individual and society have to be analyzed and revolutionized in order to free ourselves from the shackles of the capitalist system and to make true love possible. When mainstream society talks about love, they usually mean a monogamous, heterosexual relationship between a woman and a man. And yet, more often than not, those are the ones which are farthest from love. Subtle sexism and violence, dressed up as love, are part of the reality of many so-called 'romantic relationships'. Mainstream media and literature often romanticize and idealize stalking, harassment, sexual assaults and gender roles. Therefore love has to be analyzed considering the mechanisms of sexism, which take love away from all of us.

The rivalry and isolation of women* is one of the oldest and strongest tools of the patriarchy. The fight against sexism requires a fight against the culture of shaming women, which stands in the way of a feminist movement built on solidarity amongst women. In this context, social media has been playing an important role in the last few years. Many feminist authors, journalists, bloggers and activists have been able to influence the development of an unfolding feminist awareness. The variety of issues discussed, also including queer, anti-colonial, anti-racist and anti-capitalist perspectives on feminism, have been made more available through social media and have provided us with the big opportunity to connect and organize globally. Instead of intensifying the excessive focus on physical beauty and consumption, the potential of social media can be directed

ing out the love into the world and also nurturing and loving the community at the same time. As the philosopher and psychoanalyst Erich Fromm puts it: *"If I truly love one person I love all persons, I love the world, I love life. If I can say to somebody else, 'I love you,' I must be able to say, 'I love in you everybody, I love through you the world, I love in you also myself.'"*

We are far from having said everything there is to say about love. Though to begin with, we should understand that loving requires awareness, morale and the will to change oneself and society. In a society which is characterized by egoism, rivalry and fear, love cannot blossom. The one who fights for love knows no fears anymore and gets the required strength to pave the way for a free, socialist society. Love is a stronger force than anger, fear or hate. Building something might be more difficult, but it is much stronger than destroying something. And this might be one of the most beautiful things we can learn from the Kurdish movement. One slogan of the Kurdish movement says: *If you want to live, live in freedom!* – In the same way we as youth, feminists, philosophers, artists and revolutionaries can say: *If you want to love, love in freedom!*

world and bear the birth of a new society built upon truly revolutionary love. To realize love between two people, it is not only essential that every one of them undergoes a change. A collective rebellion has to emerge as well. Sometimes this can also mean fighting against each other. Fighting against each other does not imply hating each other but fighting against internalized sexism through (self-)criticism. The conditions which make love almost impossible must not be accepted. Our comrade Mehmet Aksoy (Firaz Dag) left behind some powerful words: *“Don’t surrender to capitalism, don’t surrender to materialism, ugly relationships, lovelessness, disrespect, degeneration and inequality. Don’t surrender.”* Someone who truly loves must fight against all those mechanisms standing in the way of love. Unlocking these mechanisms and rebelling against them is one of our responsibilities as revolutionary young people. The ideals of a free society have to be sought and realized collectively. Everything else cannot be accepted if we want to give love a meaning.

Love is similar to a revolution. Both are often subject to misconceptions. Just as a revolution must never end at a certain point, love should not end at a certain time as well. Many people think that a revolution is an incident, only one moment where everything changes. But history and also current revolutionary movements teach us that a revolution is more of a process than an incident. A revolution, as we can see in Rojava (North Syria), must be a *permanent* process which includes all parts of life and society, so that the ideals which have been fought for continue to be vivid and meaningful. The same applies to love. Love is not an incident, not an event. When talking about romantic love for example, love does not mean falling in love once and then resting on this ‘event’. Love is not static. Love involves activity, love is flowing energy. Love means being able to meet new situations and challenges, for love gives the strength needed. Truly loving means mutual support and respect, it means being courageous and honest, it means carry-

to empowerment and solidarity, in order to make revolutionary love emerge and grow.

But above all it is the patriarchal man who has to relearn love and to experience an inner revolution. The social norms which have been imposed on men must be rejected and fought against. To truly love and respect someone, no matter in which way, the patriarchal man has to be destroyed. Of course, this does not mean that men should die, but it means that sexist, hegemonic masculinity and personality must be combatted. To love in a meaningful way, the desire to control and to be in power has to be abandoned forever. The dominant patriarchal traditions and mentalities must be broken. ‘Romantic relationships’, which are often far away from love, are in many cases based on gender roles, power fights and violence of all kinds. Marriage is often seen as an event in life which brings safety and love. Yet marriage is one of the most important means of oppression against women*, society and the youth. Due to the romanticization of marriage, many people do not know about the roots and patriarchal nature of this institution. Many of us are not aware enough of the fact that marriage is a tool of patriarchy and capitalism which forces women* to play their role as reproducer of the household, a form of unpaid labour. No matter how alternative and democratic the marriage is being organized, it still remains an institution of the patriarchal system, yet love can never be institutionalized, especially not in the states of capitalist modernity. But also leaving this aside, we can see violence in many relationships and marriages. The sexist socialization of people often leads to men believing that it is normal to be violent and abusive, and on the other side it leads to women* thinking that they have to endure sexualized, physical and verbal violence and abuse. And that is only one of many problems.

Another reality that has been shaping the industrialized society for over a century now is the increasing anonymity and alienation between people. The fascinating poems and

artworks of the period of expressionism in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century show us how a whole generation of artists and poets felt threatened by life in big cities, which is shaped by self-disintegration, isolation, fear and the sense that the world is going to end. Today, the anonymous life in big cities is a reality for many of us. Only lately a comrade said to me: 'In the capitalist world you could die in your home and nobody would notice for months'. There is much truth in these words. Often we are comfortable with the experience of isolation and loneliness, because nobody will intervene in your life or stand in your way, nobody will demand anything from you. You can even die in your home and nobody would care. But the emptiness and meaninglessness will sooner or later take over. One loses sight of the meaning of their own existence and life. And the more one moves away from society and social life, the unhappier one gets and the more meaningless life and the existence of everything will appear.

Love, understood as a free and courageous energy of warmth and solidarity, gives meaning. The ones who get to know love, the ones who get in touch with the magic of love, will no longer seek for any higher sense in life. Not in money, wealth and profit, but in love we find life and freedom. That might be the reason why so many people set their hope on dragging another person into their isolation. But it does not matter where or not there are one or two persons involved, isolation will be isolation. Love cannot thrive in isolation. Not being connected to collective life and communities will lead to frustration and dissatisfaction. This can be observed when looking at the relationship between parents and children. When parents keep trying to take possession of their child and keeping it away from society, it is likely that the child will have fears and keep a distance to society while not being able to develop their autonomy. However, a child that grows up in a loving and caring community will learn about the worth of love, collective life and solidarity.

When people love each other, they must not see each other as an escape from their loneliness. They must not consume each other, for love is not consumption. We are used to consumption, whether we admit it or not. Capitalism trains us for calculating everything, that's why we have also started charging and calculating when it comes to friendships and love. When somebody has disappointed or hurt us, or does not 'meet our expectations', we tend to treat this person as a waste. We are angry with ourselves for having 'invested' time, trust and love, as if our love had some kind of market value or as if our love was limited. But love does not mean finding a possession to own, makeup up and dress as we like and throw away as soon as it does not please us anymore. Love means fighting, which is not only fighting *against* but fighting *for* something in the first place. Love has to fight to fulfil itself. And that does not only apply to romantic relationships but for all kinds of relations. We tend to flee as soon as something does not work out the way we want it. Anonymity and the option of isolating ourselves give us the comfort to draw back and escape the problems. Doing this we tend to think highly of ourselves, which is why we put ourselves out of the 'social danger' of being criticized. Because after all, there is the sole and safe bubble which we can crawl back into. This kind of fears often keep us away from true, deep love.

But although it is a very difficult task to overcome isolation and alienation under capitalism and the 5000 year old mentality of patriarchy it is possible to abandon old habits, behaviours and beliefs, to renew oneself and to completely revolutionize our heart. The youth is, as the imprisoned activist of the Black Panther Movement Mumia Abu-Jamal writes, the natural carrier of revolutionary energy, they are capable of changing themselves in the face of overwhelming forces, using their bodies — seething with revolutionary transformation — to change their environments, and enact social change. If the youth fulfils this radical change, it will carry along the whole